

Weekly COVID-19 Update – Dec. 31, 2021: Record Number of New Positive Cases, Current Hospitalizations

DOVER, DE (Dec. 31, 2021) – The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is providing an update on the most recent statistics related to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Delaware, as of 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 30, 2021. DPH reported the highest number of new positive daily cases since the start of the pandemic with 3,381 positive cases reported to the state Wednesday, Dec. 29, 2021. In addition, the total number of current COVID-19 hospitalizations surpassed the record high this week with 485 individuals hospitalized as of Thursday, Dec. 30. The previous high was 474 on Jan. 12, 2021.

Because of the rapid spread of COVID-19 and the contagiousness of the Omicron variant, DPH strongly encourages people not to gather with others outside of their household for New Year's celebrations this weekend. If someone with the virus attends or hosts an indoor gathering, there is a high risk for transmission, especially if face masks are not used and social distancing is not maintained. Infected individuals can release particles and droplets of respiratory fluids that contain the SARS CoV-2 virus into the air when they exhale. When people gather indoors – where they share the same air – the very fine droplets and particles will continue to spread and can accumulate, and infection is likely.

Note: Due to the large volume of COVID-19 lab results received recently by the Division of Public Health and the time needed to process the reported results into its database, some data typically reported in this weekly summary will not be available this week, specifically the weekly summary of the

proportion of unvaccinated/partially vaccinated cases, hospitalizations and deaths; variant and sequencing updates; and breakthrough case data. DPH will work to provide updates on these data next week.

COVID-19 Cases and Hospitalizations:

Total positive cases since March 11, 2020: 180,366

7-day average of new positive cases: 1,503.1, a significant increase from 850.6 last week

7-day average for the percentage of total positive tests: 18.4%, a significant increase from 12% last week

Hospitalizations: 485, an increase of 84 from last week; critically ill: 55, an increase of 3 from last week

Total COVID-19 deaths: 2,286

Total COVID-19 deaths reported since last week: 15

COVID-19 Vaccinations:

Total number of doses administered in Delaware: 1,556,217

Percentage of Delawareans 5+ who have received at least one dose (CDC data): 81.2%

Percentage of Delawareans 12+ who have received at least one dose (CDC data): 86.7%

Percentage of Delawareans 18+ who received at least one dose (CDC data): 88.7%

Percent of Delawareans who are fully vaccinated (CDC data): 64.2%

All qualifying Delawareans should get vaccinated. Individuals who qualify for a booster dose should get one as soon as possible. For the latest information on the COVID-19 vaccine in Delaware, visit [\[de.gov/getmyvaccine\]](https://de.gov/getmyvaccine)de.gov/getmyvaccine. For information on boosters, visit [\[de.gov/boosters\]](https://de.gov/boosters)de.gov/boosters. Delaware's latest COVID-19 vaccination statistics can be found under the Vaccine Tracker dashboard at [\[de.gov/healthycommunity\]](https://de.gov/healthycommunity)de.gov/healthycommunity.

Long-term Care Statistics:

As of 6:00 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 30, there have been a total of 3,031 positive COVID-19 cases involving long-term care residents, and 876 residents of Delaware long-term care facilities have died from complications related to COVID-19.

Updates to CDC Quarantine/Isolation Guidance:

As a reminder, the Division of Public Health announced earlier this week that it will implement updated guidance issued Dec. 27, 2021, by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to shorten the recommended time that people should isolate or quarantine after testing positive for or being exposed to COVID-19. The change is motivated by science demonstrating that the majority of COVID-19 transmission occurs early in the course of illness, generally in the 1-2 days prior to onset of symptoms and the 2-3 days after. The updated guidance can be [found here](#).

Additionally, DPH will be refocusing its contact tracing efforts to focus on case investigation and contact tracing in high-risk settings (e.g.: schools, long-term care facilities). During case investigation, epidemiologists will ask persons who are positive for COVID-19 to inform their close contacts of their positive status instead of having epidemiologists and others reach out to all close contacts. This change is due to increasing case numbers to investigate and the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, necessitating a need for DPH to prioritize its personnel and resources on preventing spread among those at highest risk.

During the next few weeks, DPH also asks for the public's patience with case investigators and contact tracers. Because it will take time for DPH to update its computer-based systems with the new guidance, contact tracers will advise individuals that the standard script they read will be based on the previous isolation and quarantine guidance, but let them know next steps for ending isolation and quarantine earlier per the new guidance.

Employers and schools are advised that they can move forward in applying the guidance to their employees and students themselves. Using the new guidance can reduce the impact of illness on a business or school's workforce. DPH systems may continue to automatically generate clearance letters for individuals who finish their isolation or quarantine period based on previous guidance. At this time, DPH will not be able to issue corrected letters using the newly released guidance. As a reminder, clearance letters are not required by Delaware Division of Public Health to return to work or school. Individuals should consult their employer or school for further guidance.

Flu Update:

Influenza cases are continuing to increase in Delaware. There were 126 laboratory-confirmed cases reported the week of Dec. 12 – Dec. 18. As of Dec. 18, 2021, the most recent date for which flu statistics are available, there have been 352 laboratory-confirmed cases for the current season. The cases involved 249 individuals from New Castle County, 40 from Kent County and 63 from Sussex County. This number reflects only the number of lab-confirmed cases; the actual number of cases circulating statewide is likely higher as not all people with the flu seek treatment, and many cases are diagnosed through rapid test kits in a provider's office versus a lab.

All individuals 6 months and older are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated against the flu if they haven't already. Flu vaccines are available at pharmacies (including those in grocery stores), participating medical provider offices, Federally Qualified Health Centers (for their patients), as well as Division of Public Health clinics. DPH is also advising the public that the flu vaccine can be administered at the same time as the COVID-19 vaccine.

For the latest information on the flu in Delaware, visit flu.delaware.gov.

Resources:

Individuals with general questions about COVID-19 should call Delaware 2-1-1, individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can text their ZIP code to 898-211, or email delaware211@uwde.org. Hours of operation are:

Monday – Friday: 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Saturday: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Medically related questions regarding testing, symptoms, and health-related guidance can be submitted by email at DPHCall@delaware.gov.

Delawareans 18 or older are encouraged to download COVID Alert DE, Delaware's free exposure notification app to help protect your neighbors while ensuring your privacy. Download on the App Store or Google Play.

DPH will continue to update the public as more information becomes available. For the latest on Delaware's response, go to de.gov/coronavirus.

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Anyone who is deaf, hard of hearing, Deaf-Blind or speech disabled can contact DPH by dialing 711 first using specialized devices (i.e., TTY, TeleBraille, voice devices). The 711 service is free and to learn more about how it works, please visit delawarerelay.com.

The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations.